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INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ETHICS.

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THE PARTING OF THE WAYS IN THE FOREIGN POLICY OF THE UNITED STATES.

THE writer of this article has been asked, almost at the moment when the present number of the JOURNAL was going to press, to contribute an article on the above subject. A profound interest in the questions involved, the belief which he shares with many, that a critical point has been reached in the career of the American people, and that a false step now may be attended with almost irretrievable disaster, together with the fact that the public mind is not yet conclusively made up, has led him to respond to the invitation. The citizen of a free commonwealth has the right and the duty not only to take part in the actual government of the country, however indirectly, but the no less important duty and right to claim his share in the formation of public opinion, the real "power behind the throne," the source from which emanate public decisions and the force which gives them effect. If he should not, on the one hand, in a spirit of undue self-esteem, exaggerate the value of his contribution, neither, on the other, should he withhold such thoughts as he may have to submit, but should express them freely and let them go for what they are worth.

We stand literally at the parting of the ways. The question before us is, whether we shall adhere to lines of policy which,

until recently, one may say until a few months ago, have had among us the authority of a sacred tradition; or whether on the spur of the moment, as it were, under the sudden effect of what is called an expansion of the political horizon, we shall launch forth on a totally new course, which the sagacity of our statesmen and the instinct of our people have hitherto rejected as repugnant to their highest interests. It is true that circumstances alter cases, that new conditions arising may prescribe a deviation from accepted standards, that the mere fact of a certain course of conduct having been persisted in for a hundred years or more does not of necessity imply that it ought still to be persisted in, if, namely, the reasons by which it was supported have in the mean time become invalid. But then it ought to be convincingly shown that these reasons have become invalid, and the *onus probandi* is upon those who counsel innovation. The attempt will here be made to summarize the chief motives which seem to incline a part of our people towards the policy of Imperialism, and then briefly to set forth some of the weightiest reasons that may be adduced on the other side.

Among the motives that operate in favor of Imperialism may be mentioned, first, national ambition, the desire to play a shining part on the great world stage, to emulate the military and naval achievements of other nations in order to prove that we have the ability to equal or to surpass them. The consciousness of the American people in the early part of their history was mainly self-centred. They were absorbed in the subjugation of the continent and in the development of its resources, and, so far as their relations to other nations were concerned, they felt that they had a mission to fulfil for the benefit of humanity, that they had attained to a degree of perfection in their political life from which others were still distant, and that others, therefore, might learn from them, not they from others. The closer connection between the Old World and the New, which has been brought about by increased facilities of communication, has largely destroyed this narrow provincialism. The jargon concerning the "effete monarchies of Europe" has long since passed

into discredit, if not entirely into disuse. No thoughtful American fails any longer to acknowledge the debt we are under to those nations whose civilization is older than ours, nor to recognize that we must still continue in many ways to be their pupils. Our young men will still go abroad to drink at the fountain-heads of science in foreign Universities, our young art-students will still seek to perfect their equipment in Paris and Rome. And even in the problems of political organization we are all willing to admit that "wisdom was not born with us," at least not all wisdom, that some of these problems have been solved more successfully in other countries than in ours. But it would be the saddest kind of mistake if the revulsion of feeling from the untenable position of our predecessors should now lead us to the opposite extreme; if, after having wrapt ourselves up in the arrogant and juvenile conceit of perfection, we should now become ashamed of the idea that we have a mission to fulfil for the benefit of mankind, and should lose the sense of that mission; if our failure to solve the political problem we have set ourselves should make us forget that the problem itself is a grander and a nobler one than any great nation has ever set itself and that its difficulties are due to its grandeur. Yes, it would be the saddest possible aberration if, instead of learning from others in the sense of adapting to our national genius the best they have to offer, we should become their servile imitators, and especially if we should imitate them where they themselves confess that they are least worthy of imitation; if instead of establishing the *Pax Americana* so far as our influence avails throughout this continent we should enter into the field of Old World strife and seek the sort of glory that is written in human blood. Can there be a more striking contrast than is to be found in the circumstance that at the very time when this young Republic seems about fatuously to assume the burdens of military and naval expenditure, from which it has hitherto been relatively exempt, the Russian Czar in his manifesto should proclaim the intolerable heaviness of such burdens, and should loudly call upon the nations to counsel together how they may be alleviated!

The second motive, and for many the principal one, is the desire to gain access to new markets for the purpose of extending our commerce and stimulating industry. I shall refer to this motive in the latter part of my article, and shall therefore do no more than mention it here.

The third motive springs from a kind of fetishistic attitude towards the flag. It consists in the belief that any territory over which the national flag has at any time been raised thereby becomes taboo to other nations, and that we are bound to defend it as being mysteriously and indissolubly connected with our national "personality." This survival of the notion of taboo with respect to the flag among a civilized people may be highly interesting from the point of view of anthropology, but it is absurd and pernicious when allowed even the slightest influence in deciding a practical question. The flag is a symbol or a sign; its sacredness consists wholly in what it signifies. The American flag in particular is supposed to signify freedom and equality, the government of all by all and for the good of all, and to stand for these ideas, not in the abstract, but as they have been colored and expressed in the customs, habits, and institutions of the people of the United States. Wherever such institutions founded upon such principles are possible, the American flag is in place as the true sign of great things signified; but wherever such institutions are not possible,—as, for instance, in the Philippines,—the presence of the flag would have no meaning whatever. The flag itself, instead of being a sacred symbol, would be a worthless bit of bunting. Nay, the persistent attempt to maintain it in the midst of a population to which the principles it represents are inapplicable would be an advertisement to the world of our own disloyalty to those principles.

The fourth motive is based upon the recognition of a duty owed by the civilized races to the uncivilized. This is certainly the most honorable of all the motives that speak for Imperialism. It may be used insincerely by some as a mere pretext to cloak their ambition or cupidity; but certainly in the case of many it gives rise to a genuine scruple of con-

science, to a feeling that we, as a people, should not isolate ourselves from the affairs of the world, that we ought to help in bringing the backward races abreast of progress, and that this is a duty which, however serious the difficulties in which it may involve us, we ought not to shirk. The existence of a duty to the backward races, it seems to us, must be admitted; but whether it is best discharged by the ordinary methods of land-grabbing, accompanied by the incidental benefits of impartial courts and the externals of Western civilization is, at least, questionable. To this also we shall presently advert.

But let us now endeavor to put before us the chief reasons that tell against the proposed Imperialistic policy. Of these, we mention three. First, the danger it involves to the political institutions of the United States; secondly, the obstacles which it is likely to place in the way of social reform in the United States; thirdly, the influence it is calculated to exert in diverting us from that line of effort along which we can best discharge our cosmopolitan duty towards other nations and towards mankind in general.

First, the danger to our political institutions. This danger has been pointed out by many able writers who have already expressed themselves on the subject. It cannot be too strongly emphasized nor too strenuously reiterated. The danger consists in this, that a democracy is by its nature incapable of ruling subject populations. The principle that an inferior class shall be ruled by a superior is the principle of aristocracies. The principle that no class shall be regarded as politically inferior, but that all shall participate on equal terms in the government is the principle of democracies. The two principles cannot keep house together in the same state. Either the inferior class must be enfranchised, raised to the same level of political rights as the others, or the democracy will inevitably tend to turn into an aristocracy.* The Athenian

* In this connection it is instructive to read the words of Mr. Whitelaw Reid, published in the September number of the *Century*: "The chief aversion to the vast access of territory with which we are threatened springs from the fear that ultimately they must be admitted to the United States. No public duty is more urgent than to resist from the very outset the concession of such a possibility. In

democracy and the Roman republic both tried the experiment of ruling subject populations. The one broke down utterly in the attempt, the other carried the imperial principle to its logical conclusion by means of a transformation in the constitution of the state. But it is said that England has succeeded, and in every discussion of this question the example of England is apt to be put prominently forward, and we are told that what England can do we can do as well. The answer to this argument is that the political institutions of England are thoroughly permeated with the aristocratic spirit, and that England succeeds in governing subject populations precisely because her government is an aristocracy, while we should not succeed because ours is a democracy. The points of similarity between England and the United States are so often accentuated that the points of difference are apt to be lost sight of. It is of capital importance that the points of difference be kept in view and clearly marked off. The English, as Mr. Bagehot puts it, are "a deferential people." The existence amongst them of a class of social superiors is tranquilly acknowledged, the habit of looking up to "one's betters" is deeply rooted. And this class of social superiors, while the political prerogatives which it once possessed have been greatly diminished, still performs a most important political function, perhaps it would not be too much to say the most important of political functions. For in all states the most vital problem is how to bring it about that the best men, the most capable, the most efficient, the most honest shall come to the top as rulers. The hereditary aristocracy of England is an instrument of selection for the sifting out of the best men, or the relatively best, as rulers. It does its work indirectly but none the less effectively. The hereditary aristocracy attracts to itself the aristocracy of wealth and of talent, and in unison with these it erects and maintains a certain standard of honesty and efficiency the influence of which is all-pervasive, and which becomes

no circumstances likely to exist within a century should they be admitted as a State to the Union."

an unwritten law to which all persons who aspire to prominent positions, whether in the legislative, the administrative, or the judicial departments of the government, must conform. I do not say that the English form of government is better than the American. I merely say that the English are a deferential people, and that we are not; that they possess an instrumentality for solving the chief practical problem of politics,—namely, the sifting out of the relatively best men as leaders,—which we lack. We have set ourselves a new and far more difficult task than theirs; we wish to dispense entirely in the body politic with irrational factors such as hereditary kings and nobles; we wish to build up our political structure with rational elements only; we wish to show, in fine, that it is possible to get the right leaders and rulers winnowed out from among the masses of men, relying solely upon the common sense and the moral sense of the masses themselves to do the winnowing. That in the beginnings of this experiment (for as a great nation we have but just entered upon our career) our efforts should in some respects have met with conspicuous failure is no reason for giving way to premature and pusillanimous despair. Perhaps the machinery of representation which we have employed for ascertaining the popular will is at fault; perhaps minority representation would relieve us of many of our difficulties; perhaps what is called the “organization of universal suffrage” would help;* but, at any rate, it is too early to desert the standard of rational politics and give up the cause as lost because we have met with an initial check, however serious. But, on the other hand, the fact that we have not yet succeeded to the extent that we ought to, and may some day hope to, in bringing to the front as leaders the public-spirited, the efficient, the incorruptible, is an excellent reason why we should not indefinitely increase the chances of corruption by sending such men as would now be likely to be selected to govern subject populations in distant quarters of the globe. The fact that England has succeeded is no reason why we should suc-

* See on this important subject, Charles Benoist, “La Crise de l’État moderne.”

ceed; the radical difference in the conditions that prevail in the two countries is patent.

But the danger of increased corruption is not the only one; there is a subtler evil to be dreaded. The identity of the governing and the governed is of the very essence of the democratic principle; let this identity be broken up in any part of the state, let a differentiation take place between the class that governs and another class that is governed, without having completely the right to determine how it shall be governed, and the same differentiation will tend to spread to other parts of the state and become more and more general. Plainly, if we accustom ourselves to see millions of persons who live within the territories which belong to the United States excluded from the rights of citizenship on the ground that they are not fitted to exercise them, the question will presently be raised—indeed, here and there it has already been raised—whether on the same ground millions of persons now exercising the franchise within the limits of the United States ought not to be deprived of their rights. That universal suffrage is the indispensable safeguard of liberty; that no class, however well intentioned, can be trusted to legislate for another; that even the so-called lower classes know where the shoe pinches them better than their superiors in education can know it for them,—these elementary truths will then tend to fall into oblivion, and a habit of mind will be generated consistently with which democratic institutions cannot live. The masses of the people and all citizens who have not yet lost their faith in the capacity of the masses to become politically regenerate have every reason to oppose with the utmost earnestness the proposed policy of Imperialism. It is anti-democratic, as its very name implies.

The second reason against Imperialism, referred to above, is that it is contrary to the interests of social reform. The wage-earning class in particular and all who believe that the progress of society as a whole depends on the improvement of the condition of the wage-earning class have reason to oppose the new policy. And this not only, as has often been said, because the degraded labor of the tropics may thus be brought

into direct competition with American labor, and tend to lower the rate of remuneration and the standard of living, but for another reason. The appetite for colonial dependencies, which is characteristic of the modern industrial nations, is due to the fact that the modern industrial system is top-heavy. That system, founded on the economic maxim of buying cheap and selling dear, when applied to human labor, leads at last to a kind of *reductio ad absurdum*. The wages of labor are depressed as far as possible for the sake of profit, or, if increased, are increased reluctantly in merely arithmetical progression, while at the same time the volume of production is enlarged in something like geometrical progression, and thus a condition of things is brought about in which the great body of manual workers, who are also the natural consumers, are no longer able to absorb the product, and what is called over-production ensues. From the condition of affairs thus roughly described there are two alternative exits. The one is to seek new markets abroad, keeping the wage-earners at home relatively poor, and this has led to the colonial policy of the European nations; the other is to enhance the power of consumption on the part of the wage-earners at home, and this it would seem is the policy which the best traditions of our past as well as our hopes for the future should engage us to adopt. Whatever tends to increase the skill and efficiency of the laborer and artisan, whatever tends to diversify agriculture and industry and to modify mere competition by the encouragement of collective effort of the voluntary sort, and especially whatever tends to deepen the respect we feel for every man in virtue of his character as a man will make in this direction. Mr. Bryce* says, "As regards trade, the United States would doubtless, like every country, gain by an increase in export of manufactured goods. But such an increase is not essential to her prosperity—first, because she relies largely upon her exports of food stuffs and such raw materials as cotton; secondly, because she has in her enormous popu-

* In his article entitled "Some Thoughts on the Policy of the United States," in the September number of *Harper's Magazine*.

lation a splendid and swiftly increasing home market for goods of all kinds." To make this home market increasingly capable of absorbing the present surplus product is, indeed, one of the worthiest aims that our statesmen and reformers can set themselves. But to accomplish this it will be necessary to think less of the market and more of the "home," to regard labor less in the light of a commodity, and more as a condition upon which men, women, and children depend for the attainment of their human ends. It is hardly necessary to add that what has been said is not intended as a counsel of complete isolation, a condemnation of foreign trade, or an attempt to set up hard and fast limits of any kind. The point is that there are two tendencies between which we must elect, the one to keep the wage-earner relatively poor and to unload the inevitable surplus product on the peoples of distant countries, the other to make the masses of our own people increasingly capable of absorbing what is now a surplus product. It is the latter which self-interest and morality alike urge us to adopt.

The last subject to which I wish to allude is that of our cosmopolitan duties. That the civilized races have a duty to perform towards the uncivilized cannot be doubted. But when we come to consider what the nature of that duty is we find ourselves face to face with a large and complex question, which it is barely possible to touch upon here. Suffice it to say that the attitude of the advanced towards the backward races should be educational, and should be governed on the whole by the same principles that are at present everywhere revolutionizing the science of education. We need but substitute the word race or people for the word individual to make these principles immediately and fruitfully applicable. Among the most important of them, perhaps, are the following: that the educator must have at heart the true interest of those whom he wishes to educate, and not make them merely subservient to his own interests. In the present instance this would mean that a civilized people (that honestly proposes to uplift an uncivilized must not go among them with the desire for profit in its heart and the language of humanitarian progress on its lips. A second principle, now generally

acknowledged by all educators, is, that education to be genuine must be individualized, which means adapted to the individuality of those who are to receive it; that we may not in arbitrary fashion seek to imprint some stereotyped pattern of excellence that commends itself to us upon another's nature, but rather follow the leadings of his nature and develop him according to his own genius. Applying this rule of pedagogy to the problem of elevating the peoples of the Orient, it would follow that what we need is a new type of Missionaries of Civilization, who, as practical psychologists, will make it their business to study the peculiar genius of the people among whom they live, and will endeavor not so much to implant foreign ideas and ideals as to bring to the light the highest and best things of which those peoples are capable, along their own lines. Another maxim of education is, that while coercion may be used for the purpose of repressing gross violations of law, or of overcoming inveterate indolence, it should ever be employed for the good of those who are subjected to it, and with a view to being discontinued when the occasion for it ceases. According to this maxim, it would be desirable that the civilized nations of Europe and America should agree and combine to jointly repress such outrages as those lately committed by the Turks in Armenia, and it would also be justifiable that where civilized nations come in contact with savages they should for a time subject them, if need be, to a species of military rule in order to help them in acquiring those habits of industry without which progress towards better conditions is impossible. But it should be distinctly added, in this connection, that a monarchical or aristocratic people is far better fitted to assume such a task than a democracy, since the subjection of class to class is congenial to the former types of government, while it is thoroughly repugnant to the latter. A science of education applied to backward peoples, a pedagogy of nations, is a conception so new, opens up such vast fields of inquiry and speculation that the few analogies here set down can but serve to awaken interest, not to satisfy it. And yet it may be permitted in closing to submit one other analogy.

It is not every one's vocation to be a teacher of the young,—that is, of undeveloped individuals; nor is it every people's vocation to be the teacher of other undeveloped peoples. Suppose some one had represented it as a duty to Isaac Newton to communicate to the young a part of his vast acquisitions in the domain of natural philosophy, and for this purpose to spend a portion of his time in teaching school. He might justly have replied that he could be of far more use to his contemporaries and to posterity by devoting all his time and all his energy to the prosecution of the profound researches in which he was engaged until he should have brought them to a triumphant conclusion. And so we may say, without presumption and without vain-glory, that a nation, too, may consecrate itself to the advancement and perfection of the principles of government rather than to the extension of those already accepted. Such is our case. We should join, indeed, with other nations in preventing international outrage; we should send out gifted individuals to dwell as Missionaries of Civilization among the natives of distant lands. But, as a people, we should not attempt to keep school, having backward peoples for our pupils; we should not suffer ourselves to be diverted from the great experiment on which we are engaged. That experiment, on the scale and under the conditions in which it is being tried, is new. It means the attempt to build up a rational state. To establish freedom, not in the sense of the unhampered expansion of the strong, but in that nobler sense in which it signifies the possibility for each, even for the humblest, of "living the best life," by discharging with maximum efficiency the particular social function for which nature has fitted him. Generations must still elapse before the success of this experiment can be assured. All the gifts, all the energies of mind and heart which we as a people possess, will be needed for its prosecution. If we shall succeed, even approximately, in the fulfilment of this great task, we shall have deserved well of human kind, and shall certainly have discharged in the truest and best way our cosmopolitan duty.

FELIX ADLER.

NEW YORK.